

*Bonnie Jean
Benson*



*Rachel Larsen
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1st Hour*

Bonnie Jean Benson

This Biography was written by Rachel Larsen, daughter, on January 15th, 2008

Bonnie Jean Benson was born on September 5, 1970 in Idaho Falls, Idaho at the LDS Hospital. She had lots of dark hair, and was the third daughter and third child born to Morris and Jean Benson.

When she was growing up, her dad was involved in many lines of work. During Bonnie's younger years, he ran a feed lot with his brother, Orval. He really enjoyed working with the livestock, being outdoors, and being self-employed. He did that for several years until the sugar factory nearby, who owned the property on which the feed lot sat, closed down. Soon after, he and his brother went into the meat packing business and owned Benson's Meat Plant. However, working indoors didn't suit him well. He moved on and used some skills that he had honed in his youth as an electrician. He went to work for a startup company called ECSI, where he installed phone systems. He did that for several years until he retired a few years ago.

Bonnie's mom was trained as a nurse when she was in her twenties, and she worked one or two days a week from the time Bonnie was in 5th grade until she retired several years later.



The oldest Benson child is Laurie, and she is four years older than Bonnie. Shannon is two years older than Bonnie, and her brother Joel is two and a half years younger. Julie is two and a half years younger than Joel. Kimball was the baby of the family, and was born four and a half

years after Julie.

Bonnie really enjoyed school growing up. When she first started out she was so excited to go—perhaps because she had seen her sisters go before—that her mom said she was ready to go out the door to kindergarten two hours before it even started. Bonnie's mom sewed and made all the children cute clothes to wear. Bonnie had a little pink outfit which she really liked. She learned to read before she started school; that was an advantage in the early years. It made her feel pretty smart because in the reading program, they started her off at an advanced level and that built her confidence.



One time her grandpa asked her if she was the best student in the class. Her response was, "If I said yes, I would be bragging. But if I said no, I would be lying."

She did well in her years of school. She wasn't a scholar, she struggled with math and science, but she really enjoyed learning, especially English and writing.

When she was young, she enjoyed playing with friends, but was quite a homebody. She really enjoyed playing with her siblings. On Sunday afternoons they would put on plays or puppet shows (Laurie was usually the director) for their parents. They would also put blankets on their bunk beds and pretend like they were flying on a rocket ship.

I remember Bonnie telling a story about how she had a monkey named Coconut, and how she had pretended to send him on a mission to Finland. Bonnie gave him a program when he was going away. Laurie gave a farewell speech and Shannon performed a musical number.

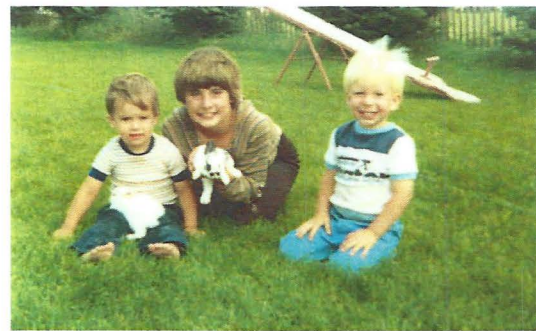
Most of Bonnie's friends she had growing up lived in the neighborhood. She had one friend that lived across the street named Melissa Caruthers, and they went to school together. They often dreamed about flying, standing up on the fence and jumping off with cardboard wings and such. Of course, that idea never took flight. With her other friends she loved to



play with her dolls, stuffed animals, dress up, and pretend. She had another friend, Kurt Clements, who lived around the corner. Probably because he was a boy, he and Bonnie used to play with pretend guns and SWAT team together.

Their family had many pets growing up. They had several cats and a couple of dogs. They also had a grumpy goat named Goby. He seemed to get loose often and the kids would have to chase him around the neighborhood. The neighbors got to know him pretty well.

Bonnie once told her dad that she wanted a rabbit. They went to get the rabbit from an ad in the newspaper and somehow ended up coming home with eight (I guess so everybody could have one). But, as rabbits do, they multiplied



and that was Bonnie's favorite part—getting to see baby rabbits. Her dad built a pen for them and the children learned how to feed and care for the rabbits. They also had to catch them when they escaped.

Music was a big part of the Benson family's life. It was part of their parents' lives growing up and they passed it on to their children. Each of the children took piano. Although the boys quit piano later on, they did other musical instruments like trumpet and trombone. Bonnie played the oboe for a short time. She did piano and voice as

well. Her sisters did violin and flute, as well as piano.

Their family also had the chance to go around and perform for church and civic groups. No one knows exactly how they got it, but somehow they were given the name of "The Benson Bells".



They put on a variety show, and they would come up with some jokes and some dialogues. They would do some duets, and the three oldest girls—Laurie, Shannon, and

Bonnie—would sing trios and play them on the piano. They also put together a group of numbers and won the "*Idaho Sate Farm Bureau*" talent contest. That was a real highlight in their youth.

Some of the things that were popular when Bonnie was growing up were *The Nancy Drew* and *Hardy Boys* mysteries. *Little House on the Prairie* was a book and television show that was also well known. Everyone liked Disney movies, and they would come out with several comedies that were fun. The Benson family also enjoyed watching *Gilligan's Island*, *The Brady Bunch*, *The Addams' Family*, and Saturday morning cartoons.

Christmas at the Benson's was a lot of fun. Often on Christmas Eve they would go over to their Grandma and Grandpa Johnson's house and have a meal with the extended family. Their grandparents used to have this little metal ornament where the angels would go around, powered by burning candles

underneath. They had Swedish ancestors and sometimes they would play into those traditions.

Bonnie and her sisters would often have trouble going to sleep on Christmas Eve, like so many children do. One year Bonnie and her sisters were getting ready for bed when Santa came through the door. He had a big red coat and hat and a glistening white beard. He had come a little early to make sure the children were asleep. When he saw the little girls standing there in awe, he handed them each a little necklace and told them to go back to bed so he could come back later to deliver their presents. Bonnie's necklace had a little tea cup on it. That is one of her favorite Christmas memories.

When they woke up on Christmas morning they would all scream; they were so excited about the gifts Santa had brought them. They also loved the presents from their parents and siblings. Bonnie usually got dolls and stuffed animals. Her parents made Christmas very memorable for all of them.

Bonnie was in the 6th grade and eleven years old when she attended her first dance. She didn't dance with anyone, but for part of it everyone got



out and danced and did their own thing and that was fun for her. She enjoyed attending later dances as well.

She was fourteen when she got her driver's license. That was the age in Idaho, so people could help on the farms. She wasn't that great of a driver at first. Her driver's education teacher told her mom that he'd never been so scared in his life. On one of her first trips after she got her driver's license, she was driving to her Aunt Sonya's with her mom in their big brown van. She got pulled over for speeding and that was a very traumatic experience, but she's gotten better since then.

Her very first date was to the school homecoming dance. She went to the dance with one of her best friends, Chase Crawford, but there was never an inkling of a romantic relationship between them. She wasn't sure what to expect from dating, but holding hands as she and Chase went off the dance floor and being on a formal date was really weird for her. When she got home, she told her mom, "I don't care if I ever go on a date again!"

In her junior year of high school, Bonnie was sixteen going on seventeen, and had the opportunity to be Leisl in the community performance of *The Sound of Music*. Even though it took so much time and effort, the directors and cast were great and she had a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Just like in the movie *The Sound of Music*, Bonnie had to kiss the young man playing Rolph. Well, they were supposed to keep kissing until the lights were dimmed. Once, to play a joke on them, instead of turning the lights off after they kissed, they kept them on. Of course, Bonnie and the young man had

to keep kissing. She was kind of embarrassed, but everyone thought it was really funny.

In eighth grade, Bonnie knew that she wanted to be a reporter. She thinks that interest stemmed from a class she had in the sixth grade about current events. She loved to learn about the world and the different people who made news and so she started writing stories that were part of a collection the school put together. She also wrote for the school newspaper in high school.

In 1988, Bonnie attended Ricks College, now BYU-Idaho, and graduated in the spring of 1990. That same summer she went to BYU and in 1992 graduated with her Bachelor's degree in *Broadcast Journalism*.

Bonnie met her future husband, Stephen Larsen, when they were both freshman at Ricks College. When Bonnie first got to college, she was very homesick. She just wanted to be back with her friends and family. Even though she was homesick, when she started getting to know people in her LDS ward it became a wonderful experience. She first saw Steve passing the sacrament and thought he was not only good looking but just looked so "wholesome". She saw him later at a "Get to Know You" dance during one of the first weeks on campus and she said, "Aren't you in my ward?" He asked her to dance a couple of times and they began to talk. So through their association in the ward they started getting to know each other. They also started going on walks together. That was a great yet simple way of asking questions and getting to know about one another and one another's families. They started dating

and making goals together, such as exercising, reading scriptures, and serving others. It was always a very positive and uplifting experience for both of them. A few months later, things started getting a little more serious. They went to a formal dance at Christmas and had a great time together. At the end of January they continued to date but they kept things open and dated others. That summer, Steve went on his mission to Barcelona Spain. Bonnie and Steve kept in touch, writing each other once a



month. Bonnie continued her schooling at Ricks and later at BYU. Steve came home from his mission and transferred to BYU. After knowing each other for about three and a half years, they became engaged and got married in the Idaho Falls Temple in the spring of 1992.

After they were married, they lived in Provo, Utah. Bonnie had graduated from school but Steve continued to attend BYU. Bonnie didn't consider herself a gourmet cook but it was fun for her to try new things. They moved into their first apartment and that first day she made him a tuna fish sandwich for lunch while he was studying. She felt very domestic. In those early days, Bonnie was more sensitive and wanted to impress Steve

and make him think she was a good cook and a good homemaker. So one time, Steve came home from school at BYU and she had prepared a special meal and had everything just right. They started talking. They had a bit of a disagreement but proceeded with the dinner. Bonnie put the finishing touches on the meal. She spread some butter on Steve's bread and he said, "Oh! I like my bread without butter." That was the last straw for Bonnie. She put down that knife and said something like, "Well! Why don't you just make your own dinner!" She went into the living room, sat on the couch and cried. Steve just stood in the kitchen not knowing what in the world he had said to upset her. Bonnie still remembers that dumbfounded look on his face. That was one of their early lessons.

On June 6th, 1994, Bonnie had their first child, Rachel Jean Larsen. It was an amazing experience for them. Rachel surprised them by coming a month early. She was just a tiny thing at 4 lb., 12 oz. and was such a blessing. She was the most beautiful baby with big brown eyes and such a happy, sweet disposition. Bonnie felt emotionally overwhelmed at first, learning how to care for a baby. Luckily, Bonnie and Steve had two good role models in their own mothers and Steve was a wonderful father from the start. They figured it out, but were nervous like any first time parents.

Bonnie and Stephen Larsen now live in Wellsville, Utah with their five children: Rachel Jean-13 years old, Nathan Stephen-12 years old, Christine-10 years old, Jared Morris-8 years old, and Anne Marie-6 years old.

Bibliography

Larsen, Bonnie. Interview. Wellsville, Utah: January 2, 2008.

When and where were you born?

I was born on September 5th, 1970 in Idaho Falls, Idaho at the LDS Hospital. I had lots of dark hair and I was the third daughter and third child born to Morris and Jean Benson.

Can you tell us about your family growing up? Your father's occupation?

My dad did many things. During my younger years he ran a feed lot with his brother Orville and he really enjoyed working with the livestock and being outdoors and being self-employed. He did that for several years until the sugar factory nearby, who owned the property on which the feed lot sat, closed down and then he and his brother went into the meat packing business and owned the Benson's Meat Plant. He didn't like working indoors, that kind of work didn't suit him well and so he then moved on and used some skills that he had honed in his youth as an electrician and he went to work for a company called ECSI, a startup company where he installed phone systems. He did that for several years, up until he retired a few years ago. My mom was trained as a nurse when she was in her twenties and she worked one or two days a week from the time I was in 5th grade up until she retired several years later. We have the nursing tradition in our family. I did a lot of things with my brothers and sisters growing up. We had an enjoyable time together.

Who were your siblings?

Laurie is my oldest sister, and she is four years older than I am. Shannon is two years older than I am. My brother Joel was born two and a half years after me and Julie was two and a half years after him. Kimball was the baby, and he was born four and a half years after Julie, so he came along a little later.

How did you enjoy school, and what kind of student were you?

When I first started out I was so excited to go, my mom said that I was ready to go out the door to kindergarten two hours before it started that day. I remember my mom made us cute clothes. She sewed, and I had this cute little pink outfit. And so I was quite eager to start school perhaps because I had seen my sisters go off to school. I learned how to read before I went to school, and so that was an advantage in the early years and it made me feel pretty smart because in the reading program they started me off at an advanced level and so that was a confidence builder for me. One time my Grandpa asked me if I was the best student in my class. My response was, "If I said yes, I would be bragging. But if I said no, I would be lying." I did well in my years of school. I wasn't a scholar but it was fun to learn. I struggled in math and science more but I really enjoyed English and writing which later lead to my interest in journalism.

Who were some of your friends growing up and what did you enjoy doing with them?

I had a friend across the street—most of my friends were in the neighborhood—we went to kindergarten and school together. My friend across the street was Melissa Caruthers. I remember, we dreamed about flying, standing up on the fence and jumping off with cardboard wings, of course that idea never took flight. With my other friends we would love to play with our dolls and stuffed animals and play pretend. I had one friend, he was a boy, his name was Kurt Clements and he lived around the corner. I guess because he was a boy, we used pretend guns and played SWAT team together.

What type of pets did you have growing up?

We, we had a lot. We had and grumpy goat named Goby who seemed to get loose often and we'd have to go and chase him around the neighborhood so she was well known. I

told my dad once that I wanted a rabbit and we went to get the rabbit from an ad in the newspaper and somehow ended up coming home with eight. I guess so everybody could have a rabbit. But, as rabbits do, they multiplied and that was the funnest part was seeing baby rabbits. My dad built a cage and a pen for them so we learned how to feed and care for them. We also had to catch them when they escaped. We had a dog once or twice for a short period of time and we had a few cats.

Can you tell us what your family did musically?

Music was a big part of our lives. It was in our parents lives growing up and they passed it on to us. Each of us took piano although the boys quit taking. But they did musical instruments like trumpet, and trombone. I did the oboe for a short time, and did piano and voice. My sisters did violin, flute, as well as piano. We had the chance as a family to go around and do programs for church and civic groups and that was a fun opportunity for us to learn to be in front of people and how to interact with adults.

Tell us more about your musical group.

I don't know if someone gave us the name the Benson Bells, but we kind of put on a variety show. We would come up with some jokes and some dialogues. We would do some duets. The three oldest girls—myself, Laurie, and Shannon—would sing trios and we would play piano trios. We put together a group of numbers and we won Idaho State Farm Bureau Talent Contest and so that was a real highlight in our youth.

What kind of movies, books, and stuff were in style when you were growing up? Let's see. I know the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys, mysteries were popular. Also *Little House on the Prairie* was a book and television show. Disney movies were quite popular back then. They would have several fun comedies that Disney would come out with. On television, then we watched Gilligan's Island and The Brady Bunch, and Adam's Family and Saturday morning cartoons. There weren't nearly the number of children shows or the channels that there are now.

Can you tell us any Christmas memories?

Christmas was a lot of fun. Often on Christmas Eve we would go over to my Grandma and Grandpa Johnson's house who also lived in our city and we would have a meal with our extended family. I remember they used to have this little metal structure where the angels would go around, powered by burning candles underneath. We have a Swedish tradition so sometimes we would play into those traditions. Christmas morning was always fun. We woke up and we were all screamers. We were really excited about our gifts that Santa had brought us as well as our parents and siblings. I usually got dolls and stuffed animals. Our parents made Christmas very memorable for us.

How old were you when you attended your first dance?

I was just thinking about that today. I was twelve, because I was in the Junior high, which was age 7 through 9. No, I was in 6th grade and we had a dance. I didn't dance with anybody, but for part of it we all got out and danced and did our own thing and that was fun. So, that was my first introduction so some dances were better than others.

How old were you when you got your driver's license and how did that go?

I was fourteen, that was the age in Idaho, so people could help on the farms and I wasn't a great driver. My driver's Ed teacher told my mom that he's never been so scared in his life because I almost caused a serious accident. On one of my first trips after I got my

license, I was driving to my Aunt Sonya's house with my mom in our big brown van and I got pulled over for speeding and that was very traumatic. So, I got off to a rough start but I think I've gotten better sense then.

Can you tell us about your first date?

I wasn't sure what to expect from dating, but my first date was to the school homecoming dance with my friend Chase Crawford who was one of my best friends in high school but there was never an inkling of a romantic relationship so to be on a formal date and to like hold hands as we went off the dance floor was so awkward and so different for me that I came home and I told my mom, "I don't care if I ever go on a date again."

Can you tell us how it was being Leisl in the Sound Of Music?

That was a wonderful experience. I was in my junior year and so I was sixteen going on seventeen and one thing they were hoping for was that I would have my braces off, because they didn't have braces back then and so I did get them off a few weeks before. It was a tremendous experience to be in a community production under wonderful directors and I enjoyed everything about it, you know, even though the rehearsals were long and it took a lot of time I just loved the cast and the opportunity to perform in this musical.

As you continued through high school, what career options interested you?

I remember it was in eighth grade that I knew I wanted to be a reporter and I think it stemmed from a class I had in the sixth grade about current events and it was so interesting to learn about the world and the different people who made news and so in eighth grade that cemented in my mind a love of writing, and I decided to be a reporter and so I started writing stories that would be part of a collection that the school put together and then in high school I wrote for the school newspaper and it was fun to see those features be part of the newspaper and so that continued when I majored in college in Broadcast Journalism.

Where did you attend college at?

I did my first two years at Rick's College, now BYU Idaho, and I graduated in the spring of 1990 and that same summer then I went to BYU and in two more years I graduated with my Bachelor's degree.

Can you tell us more about what you did in the area you were studying?

It was multi-faceted because both at Rick's and at BYU we learned how to write stories, how to become better at writing, and also how to radio, how to broadcast on radio and television and as part of our assignments, we would go out and do news stories that we were assigned, as well as we would work like in a mock studio, we would learn how to edit and direct and run the camera and do sports and weather, and anchoring. So it gave us a taste of everything.

Can you tell us about where you and dad first met and your courtship?

We were both freshmen, and being freshmen at college is fun, because most of the guys still have their missions, and so you can get to know people and everything is very fun and very innocent and going up to college was hard. I was very homesick for home and family. But then as I got to know people in my ward it became a wonderful experience and I saw Steve passing the sacrament and thought he was not only good looking but he just looked so wholesome and he looked like a really good person. I saw him later at a Get to Know You Dance during one of the first weeks on campus and I said, "Aren't you in my ward?" and he asked me to dance a couple of times and we began to talk. So

through our association in the ward then we got to know each other and we started going on walks and that was a great yet simple way of asking questions and getting to know about one another and one another's families. Then we started dating and it was always so positive and so uplifting and we'd set goals together to exercise and to read our scriptures and to do service for others and so from the start it was a relationship that really built and lifted both of us. Then, things became a little more serious, we went to a formal dance at Christmas and had a great time together and then at the end of January we continued to date and we kept things open and dated others and then that summer he went on his mission and we wrote, just once a month, he went to Barcelona, Spain, and I continued my schooling at Rick's and then at BYU and then he came home and transferred to BYU and then we became engaged and so we knew each other for about three and a half years before we got married. We were married in the spring of 1992.

Is there any stories you would like to share from when you were first married?
(Learning to cook, stuff like that?)

I don't consider myself a gourmet cook but it was fun to try new things. I remember when we moved into our first apartment and that first day I think I made him a Tuna Fish sandwich for lunch while he was studying so I felt very domestic. In those early days, it was funny because, you know, I was more sensitive and wanted to impress him and make him feel like I was a good cook and a good homemaker and so one time I had made a special meal and everything and he came from school at BYU and I had everything just right and we started talking and we had just a little bit of a disagreement and anyway, we proceeded with the dinner and I put the finishing touches on the meal and I spread some butter on his bread and he said, "Oh! I like my bread without butter." And that was just the last straw and I just put down that knife and said something like, "Well, why don't you just make your own dinner!" and I just went into the living room and just sat on the couch and cried and he just stood in the kitchen not knowing what in the world he had said to upset me and I still remember that dumbfounded look on his face. That was one of the early lessons. Sometimes when you're newlyweds things get blown out of proportion and the poor guy, I feel sorry for him, but, I guess that's what you learn as you go along.

How was it when you had your first child?

It's an amazing experience. Rachel surprised us by coming a month early and she was just a tiny, tiny little thing at 4 12 which was such a blessing. She was the most beautiful baby with big brown eyes and just such a happy, sweet disposition and I felt emotionally overwhelmed at first learning how to care for a baby but luckily we had two good roll models in our own mothers and Steve has been a wonderful father from the start and so together we figured it out, but we were nervous like any first time parents.